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Words in the news
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How mice went global

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Scientists who've been working on establishing historical patterns of human migration have found a new ally in their quest - the noble house mouse. It turns out that a study of mice genetics can provide new clues about who settled where. David Bamford reports:

Did you know that very specific parts of north-west Britain are **colonised** by Viking mice - mice that **originate from Norway**? Or that there are mice families in New Zealand whose **rodent** ancestors come from India?

A group of scientists have published their findings after a global study of mouse genetics that they say will tell us more about **human migration**, and where early colonists - going back to the Iron Age - settled many centuries ago. Because, as it turns out, the colonists **accidentally** took their home-grown mice with them - and mice, like humans, have **DNA** and genetic patterns that can be identified and classified.

One of the researchers on the project, Jeremy Searle, a professor of biology at York University in northern England, explains:

JEREMY SEARLE: Mice have been moved all throughout the world by people and clearly when you had the voyages of the discoveries, and you had settlements all round the world starting off from western Europe, they took mice with them so mice **are now absolutely cosmopolitan** around the world.

Identifying the chromosomes originating from these **seafaring** mice should provide useful data **to back up** studies such as the Genographic Project, in which the DNA of hundreds of thousands of people around the world is being catalogued with the aim of telling us where our individual ancestors came from and settled.

David Bamford, BBC

Vocabulary and definitions

colonised	here, populated (usually **to colonise** means to go, or to send other people to live in and govern another country)
originate from Norway	first lived in Norway before being moved to other places, e.g. Britain
rodent	a small mammal with large sharp front teeth, such as mice, rats, squirrels etc. Rodents make up more than a third of all living mammal species
human migration	when and where people travelled in order to settle (usually, in another country)
accidentally	by chance, not intentionally
DNA	short for deoxyribonucleic acid, the chemical at the centre of the genes of all living things
are now absolutely cosmopolitan	come from everywhere and live everywhere
seafaring	travelling, migrating
to back up	to support, to provide additional factual material to

More on this story: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/7645908.stm

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2009/07/090708_witn_mice.shtml